



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE BREAK UP OF THE ENGLISH PARTY SYSTEM.

A number of new and very remarkable features have developed themselves in English politics since the General Election of 1885—the General Election from which can be dated the time when England really became a democracy. Perhaps the most interesting and significant of these is the breaking away from the old system of two parties in the House of Commons and in the constituencies. It would seem the most interesting development to a student of politics, and there can be no doubt that it is the most fateful development in English political life since the great Reform Act of 1832. How far this departure has already proceeded, and how far this new tendency toward groups has gone, is apparent to any observant reader of the English newspapers.

For reasons which will be explained later on, it is more marked in the present House of Commons than in any of the three Houses which have been elected since 1885. In the present House of Commons, elected in 1892, it is easily possible to distinguish at least eight groups. In a preliminary sketch of these groups, it may be well to begin with the Government forces, which, departing from the traditions and precedents of centuries, are now seated to the left, as well as to the right, of the Speaker's chair. Counting the Irish members as of the Government following, these forces now number 355, subdivided into six groups. First come the Nationalists, who are now sectioned off into very distinct groups, the Parnellites and the Anti-Parnellites. I take these first because without the help of these groups the Gladstone Government could never have come into office. Next come what may be described as the official Liberal group. After it, the Radical group; and then the Welsh Radicals and the Labor and Socialistic groups. If the Scotch Radicals

and the Temperance party, both of which occasionally act as groups, are included in the enumeration, the number of groups in the Government forces is increased to eight, and the total number of groups in the House of Commons to ten.

There are only two really well-defined groups in the Opposition forces. These are the Conservatives and the Liberal Unionists. A close analysis would perhaps lead to the division of the Conservatives into two groups, of which the larger might be described as the progressive group, and the other the old-time Tory group. For present purposes, however, it will suffice to divide the Opposition into two groups, Conservative and Liberal Unionist. These two groups have been acting together since 1886, in office and in opposition; but each has still its own leader in the House of Commons, its own party whips, its own central party organization in London, managing its affairs in the constituencies; and each wing, Conservative and Liberal Unionist, has its own supporters in the daily and weekly press.

In tracing the development of this system of groups in Parliament, it is necessary to go a little further back than the Parliamentary Reform Act of 1884, which increased the electorate by over two and a half million votes, and placed political power in the hands of the laboring classes. But it is not necessary to go back many years beyond 1884. It was not until 1874, only ten years before the last Reform Act, that a third party with a leader and with whips of its own made its appearance in the House of Commons, and began to shape its policy, its proceedings in debate, and its votes in the division lobbies without reference to the desires or the convenience of either of the two older parties—the party which happened to be in office, or the party in opposition.

Long before the Irish Nationalists began to act in this manner in 1874, and before Home Rule members took the place of the Whigs who had formerly been sent from Ireland

to Westminster—long before this time, there had been divisions in the ranks of the Liberals, and in those of the Conservatives as well. In the years immediately preceding the first Reform bill, and in those immediately following its enactment, both the Liberal and the Tory party had in a measure their own subdivisions. From 1825 to 1832, practically speaking, only two political questions divided people in England. These were Catholic Emancipation, with the ecclesiastical questions, English and Irish, grouped about Catholic Emancipation, and the far more important question of Parliamentary Reform. These two questions, however, served not only to divide Englishmen into two political camps, but served also to subdivide to some extent the representatives of the two groups of thought who were sent to Parliament by the unreformed constituencies, and the members of the House of Lords who enjoyed their political privileges by virtue of recent royal favor or hereditary right. In those days the title Liberal was a designation for all who were in favor of progress and reform, no matter how slowly progress was to be made, and no matter with what amount of grudging caution reform was adopted. The generic title of Liberal then, and for many years afterward, included within its comprehensive scope Whigs whom it would now be difficult to differentiate from the Tories of ten years later on; Radicals of the Mayfair school, such as Hobhouse and Burdett; and Radicals of the philosophic, equal privileges and equal opportunities school, such as Hume and Bentham, and, later on, as Mill and Fawcett.

The Toryism of those days, of the period from 1825 to 1832, also had its subdivisions. It was about this time that the Tories, following the example of their political opponents, began to adopt a new generic title. Many of them now began to call themselves Conservatives. The late Mr. Jennings, in editing "The Croker Papers," makes the claim that Mr. Croker first introduced this title of Conservative, as applied to the Tory party, in 1831; and he cites an article

from the *Quarterly Review* of that year, written by Croker, in support of his contention that it was with Croker that the new party name originated. However this may be, the title was in use in correspondence, at least as early as 1831. It is to be found in Peel's letters of that year, and in one written in May, Peel gives some indication of the subdivisions which were then appearing in what prior to Catholic Emancipation had been the old Tory party. "I apprehend," writes Peel, "there are two parties among those who call themselves Conservatives—one which views the state of the country with great alarm; which sees a relaxation of all authority, an impatience of all that restraint which is indispensable to the existence, not of this or that, but of all governments, and which is ready to support monarchy, property, and public faith." "There is another party," continues Peel, "and that by far the most numerous, which has the most presumptuous confidence in its own fitness for administering public affairs, which would unite with O'Connell in resisting the Irish Coercion bill, which sees great advantage in a deficit of many millions, and thinks the imposition of a property tax on Ireland, and the aristocracy, a Conservative measure; decries the intemperance of the police; thinks it treachery to attack a Radical, providing that Radical hates the Government, and which, never having yet dreamed of the question how they could restore order, prefers chaos to the maintenance of the present Government."

These divisions in the ranks of the old parties, which could be noted in 1831—the division of the Liberal party into Whigs, Mayfair Radicals, and the Radicals of the equal rights and equal privileges school, and the division of the Tory party into Tories and innovating Conservatives, as roughly indicated in Peel's correspondence, continued with more or less change, and with more or less inconvenience to the party as a whole which happened to be in office, until the Home Rule contingent from Ireland became a power in 1874. But none of these subdivisions in either the Tory or the

Liberal party was continuously assertive or continuously independent. As a general thing, each subdivision was merged in its main wing on critical occasions, and for all practical purposes, until 1874, two parties, Liberals and Conservatives, were ranged one against the other, and dominated everything in the House of Commons. Up to this time, there were only two sets of whips at Westminster; one set acting for the Government, and the other for the Opposition; and until 1874, the political statisticians took no cognizance of any but the two great parties, and in the statistical tables up to the General Election of that year, every member of the House of Commons was classed either as a Conservative or as a Liberal. When a new Parliament had been elected, there may have been perhaps two or three members who called themselves Independents, but before the Parliament was a couple of years old the political statisticians, rightly or wrongly, had grouped them either with the Liberals or with the Conservatives.

There were Home Rulers in the House of Commons before 1874, but they were not sufficiently numerous to constitute themselves a party. The first Home Ruler was chosen at a by-election in 1871; and it is worth while noting that he was chosen in preference to a candidate who was supported by the priests. In the same year two more Home Rulers were elected, this time with the active help of the priests. These were Captain Nolan, who is still in Parliament, and now acting with the Parnellite group, and Mr. Blennerhassett. Captain Nolan was elected for Galway, Mr. Blennerhassett for Kerry. Captain Nolan's majority was more than 2000 in a constituency of 5000 voters. The priests, however, had been too zealous in his behalf. A petition was presented against his return, and, in delivering judgment for the petitioners against Captain Nolan, Judge Keogh declared that the Galway election had presented the most astonishing attempt at ecclesiastical tyranny which the history of priestly intolerance afforded, and described the Galway electors "as

mindless cowards, instruments in the hands of ecclesiastical despots." As a result of this judgment, the Whig candidate succeeded to the seat. There seems to have been no contest over Mr. Blennerhassett's return; but there was intense disappointment among the landlords at the result of the Kerry election. The tenants broke away from the old political domination of the landed gentry, and voted in a body for Home Rule. On one estate eighty tenants had promised to meet the agent at seven o'clock in the morning to vote as usual with the landlords. The agent was at the meeting-place at the time fixed, but the tenants were not there. They had met at another place, and were headed to the poll by the priests to vote for the Home Rule candidate.

These by-elections in Galway and Kerry, in 1871, initiated the movement for the breaking away of the tenants from the old political connection with the landlords; the movement was greatly extended between 1871 and 1874; in fact, it became almost general, with the then surprising result that at the General Election in 1874, that which returned the Tories to power under Lord Beaconsfield, the Home Rulers elected no fewer than fifty-four members: thirty-three from the counties and twenty-one from the boroughs. The Irish by-elections which followed the 1874 General Election also went successively in favor of the Home Rulers; and before the 1874-80 Parliament came to an end, the Home Rule party at Westminster had increased to sixty.

Butt and Shaw were still the leaders of the new independent Irish party; and in 1875 and 1876 Parnell was described as one of the lesser champions of the movement. The Home Rulers in the House of Commons lost no time in organizing themselves. They elected a sessional chairman; appointed whips of their own; and at once began the Parliamentary tactics, continued without intermission for ten years, which brought the party into full power, almost into full control, at Westminster in 1885, and to which they owe the control they now enjoy over the destiny of the present Government.

First of all the Irish Independents adopted their ingenious plan in the ballot for private member's days. Every Home Ruler balloted, and by this means the party as a whole possessed itself of a share of the time set apart for private members and their bills, which was out of all proportion to the party's strength in the House of Commons. English and Scotch private members, with bills to advance, who found themselves relegated by the ballot to the closing weeks of the session, to the days when the Government takes for its measures all the time of the House, complained bitterly when they saw every Wednesday during the earlier weeks of the session going to the Irish members, and to bills and resolutions in favor of Home Rule and kindred Irish subjects. They angrily declaimed against what they stigmatized as the Parliamentary bad taste of the manœuvres adopted by the Home Rulers, and they unsuccessfully sought the interference of the Speaker with a view to breaking down the Irish plan for appropriating the lion's share of the private member's days. It was all to no use. Parliamentary good taste is not, and never has been, a strong point with the Irish Nationalists. The Irishmen taught themselves the intricacies of Parliamentary procedure in all its devious details, and, whenever it was possible, they dexterously turned these intricacies to their own account. It was because the more earnest Home Rulers were so well acquainted with the procedure of the House of Commons, and so apt in turning it to their advantage, that they were able to succeed so well in the obstructive policy which was commenced in the 1874-1880 Parliament, and was continued alike against Liberal and Conservative Governments until the alliance of the Liberals and the Home Rulers was established in 1885, with Mr. Gladstone's first Home Rule bill as its basis.

The by-elections between 1874 and 1880 brought the strength of the Home Rulers in the House of Commons up to sixty. At the General Election in 1880, the Nationalists gained three additional seats, and were therefore able to

command sixty-three votes in the Parliament which lasted from 1880 to 1885. This was the Parliament which passed the Reform Act of 1884 and the Redistribution of Seats Act of 1885, the two measures which made England a democracy. Hitherto the Irish peasantry had been unenfranchised. The tenant farmers, of course, had had votes; but the rural laborers had had no voice whatever in local or in national politics. The electorate in Ireland was augmented by half a million votes as the result of the measure of 1884, and as the measure of 1885, redistributing seats, made no attempt to bring Irish representation in the House of Commons into anything like proportional representation with England and Scotland, Ireland retained to the full the measure of representation which she has enjoyed since the Union. At the Union 105 members were assigned to Ireland. For many years before the Redistribution Act of 1885, the number had stood at 103. The result of this measure and of the Reform Act which preceded it was that the Home Rule contingent at Westminster was increased at a bound from sixty-three to eighty-six; and as the electors in England, Scotland and Ulster had given neither party a majority independent of the Home Rulers, it was within the power of the Irish members to say which of the two English parties should go into possession in Downing street.

The General Election of 1885, which had thus brought the new independent Irish party practically into control in Parliament, brought with it as a consequence, the great split in the Liberal party over Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule bill, and from the General Election of 1886 onward, increased to four the number of distinct parties in the House of Commons.

It is no part of my present purpose to discuss the merits of Home Rule. But before proceeding further with the work of tracing the development of the group system, as it may be dated from 1886, it may be interesting to add a few words as to the way in which the independent Irish party was organized and maintained from 1874 to the alliance with the

Liberals in 1885. It is now comparatively easy to see how Mr. Parnell succeeded. To my mind, and writing as one who was an eye-witness of much of the manœuvring and tactics of the Irish party in the House of Commons, the outstanding fact in Mr. Parnell's tremendous success was this, that he drew the members of his following largely, if not entirely, from a class in Ireland which hitherto had had no voice or share in Imperial politics.

As soon as Mr. Parnell took control in 1878, he weeded out from the Home Rule party nearly all the men whose near or remote family connections were of any social standing in Ireland; and who, to use a common American phrase, were in politics for the spoils. To employ another Americanism, Mr. Parnell had no use for the younger sons of landed families who had failed to get into the army or to make any success at the bar, for the needy, calculating, self-seeking scions of the smaller landed gentry, who hitherto had been sent to Parliament as the representatives of Irish Whiggism, and whose only reason for seeking membership of the House of Commons was to obtain better opportunities for quartering themselves and their dependents on the Treasury. Mr. Parnell soon made it clear that politicians of this class had absolutely nothing to gain from associating themselves with the Home Rule movement.

The pledge to act with the party as directed by its leader and its whips, to accept no office nor reward from the Government, and to resign the seat whenever called upon to do so, a pledge which was exacted, from every follower of Mr. Parnell, rendered it useless for the old school of Irish Whig politicians to enter Parliament under the auspices of the new movement. Mr. Parnell, who was himself of the landed class and knew his class well, thus deliberately cut himself off from these men, and from men in their rank of life, and turned to men who were perhaps socially a grade lower, but who were immensely more reliable than the old school of Irish politicians, as it

existed from O'Connell's time to the inauguration of the Home Rule movement. He turned to the journalists and the struggling country lawyers, to the doctors and the schoolmasters, to the merchants, the shop-keepers and the inn-keepers, and from these men he recruited a little army which even the atmosphere of the House of Commons or the social exigencies of life in London could not spoil, nor in the least divert from the mission which had taken them to Westminster. Many of them, most of them in fact, were poor men; but Mr. Parnell's power in Ireland before the General Election in 1880 had come to be such that contests were comparatively few. He could, therefore, elect many of them without expense; and when contests were forced upon him, which made expense necessary, he had ample funds at his command to meet it, and in individual cases, where it was imperative, it was possible for him to furnish his poorer followers with the means for defraying their expenses in London.

In the early days of the Home Rule movement the poverty of many of Mr. Parnell's followers was the subject of endless newspaper jokes, all in more or less bad taste. One of these newspaper pleasantries told how some of the Irish members always left Westminster Palace at dinner time for a public house near by, where, it was said, sausages and mashed potatoes were to be obtained in large quantities for less money than was possible in the dining room of the House of Commons. This story has the merit of being true. It seems a trivial story to recall; but it is one which ought not to be overlooked by a student of the Irish movement in Parliament. It was because the men who followed Parnell had sufficient courage to act in this way, and were not afraid of its being known, that they were able to take and keep the pledge concerning offices and rewards which Mr. Parnell exacted from them. It was in this respect that they all differed, and for Mr. Parnell's purposes, differed for the better, from the genteel but needy and self-seeking politicians

whom they had replaced as the representatives of five-sevenths of the Irish constituencies. Members of the old school of Irish politicians, the men who perhaps had gone to Trinity, but had done little for themselves after leaving college, would never have thought of going out of Westminster Palace, because a satisfying meal could be had in the public house over the way for eighteen pence, while a dinner in the House would have cost three shillings and six pence. They would have taken the House of Commons dinner, even if they had borrowed money to pay for it, because they would have been full of the hope that some well-paid government position would soon come their way, which would enable them to wipe off all their indebtedness. I would not have it supposed from my way of presenting the story of the Irish party that I am a Home Ruler. I am not; but no student of English politics can fail to take note of these things. They help to the key of the whole situation.

The division in the Liberal party over the Home Rule bill which established the fourth party in the House of Commons is an easy one to trace. It first showed itself in the winter of 1885-86 after the General Election. It was known in December of 1885, in a more or less vague and indefinite way, that Mr. Gladstone was prepared to comply with the demands of the Nationalists; and when, in February, the Salisbury Government was defeated on the address to the Crown, and Mr. Gladstone was forming his new administration, with this knowledge in mind, Lord Selborne, the Marquis of Hartington, Sir Henry James and other members of the Liberal Ministry of 1880-85, declined to act with their old leader.

As soon as the Cabinet had been formed and the Home Rule scheme was laid before it, Mr. Chamberlain and Sir George Trevelyan withdrew, and with the other seceders from Mr. Gladstone's old following put themselves in opposition to the Home Rule demand in Parliament and the constituencies. On the ninth of April Mr. Gladstone submitted his scheme to Parliament. On the thirteenth of April permission was

given for the introduction of the bill. On the tenth of May the second reading was moved by Mr. Gladstone. The debate on this stage occupied twelve nights, and the division which sectioned off the two wings of the old Liberal party took place on the seventh of June. Members from the extreme wings of the Liberal party acted as tellers against the bill. One of these was a Whig, the other was a Radical; and ninety-three members, who, up to this time had always acted with Mr. Gladstone and the Liberal party, put themselves on record against the bill, and thus classed themselves as Liberal Unionists. It was upon these members of the old Liberal party that the brunt of the opposition to the bill in the House of Commons fell. Not a single Tory member voted for the measure. From the outset the Tories had been a solid party against the scheme, but they left the duty of talking against the bill in the House of Commons largely to the dissentient Liberals.

As soon as the vote in the House of Commons was taken, all four parties—the Gladstone Liberals, the Irish Home Rulers, the Conservatives and the Liberal Unionists—began to prepare for an immediate General Election. An understanding was at once arrived at between the two sections of the new Unionist party, that Conservative candidates were not to be put up against Liberals who had voted against the Home Rule bill. At the election six months earlier, many of the men who went into the same lobby as the Conservatives when the House divided on the Irish bill, had had hard fights with Tory candidates for their seats. Some of them had been elected by very narrow majorities over their Conservative opponents; but in almost every instance of this kind, in the General Election of 1886, the Conservatives refrained from putting up candidates against Liberal Unionists. The Gladstone Liberals were altogether too demoralized to make many fights in the constituencies against individual seceders, and as a consequence, in the next Parliament—that elected in June—there were no fewer than seventy-eight

Liberal Unionists. These with 316 Conservatives served to give Lord Salisbury a majority of 113 in the House of Commons over the combined forces of the Gladstone Liberals and the Irish Home Rulers. The Gladstone contingent had suffered severely at the polls. It was reduced to 191, as compared with 335 at the commencement of the 1885 Parliament, the losses being due to the secession of the Liberal Unionists, and the capture of Liberal seats by the Tory party.

Twice during the 1886-92 Parliament overtures were made to the Liberal Unionists to join a coalition Government; but on each occasion the overtures were declined. The Liberal Unionists voted with the Tories in all critical divisions; but they sat with the Liberals and the Irish Home Rulers on the Opposition benches. Only one of their number crossed the floor of the House of Commons. This was Mr. Goschen who succeeded Lord Randolph Churchill as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1887, and of course took his place on the Treasury Bench. Lord Hartington, Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Henry James sat in exactly the same places as they would have occupied as members of the regular Liberal Opposition, on the front bench immediately to the left of the Speaker, reserved for ex-ministers and Privy Councillors in opposition; while the rank and file of the Liberal Unionists grouped themselves on the back benches with the moderate Liberals. All through this Parliament they maintained these places, and even now the Liberal Unionists sit with the Liberals. After the election of 1892 which placed the Liberals in office, the Liberal Unionists crossed to the ministerial benches and now sit among the Liberals, although, as for nearly ten years past, they vote regularly with the Conservatives.

The action of the Liberal Unionists in persisting to sit with the official Liberals, and the corresponding action of the Irish Nationalists in persisting to regard themselves as of the Opposition, and to sit with the Conservatives, have occasioned much confusion in the present Parliament. They have constituted a complete breaking away from traditions

at St. Stephen's which are centuries old, and occurring as this breaking away has done at a time when party feeling is more bitter than it has ever been before, it is not asserting too much to say that this distribution of parties within the Chamber accounts for some of the regrettable scenes which marked the session of 1893, and so greatly lowered the tone of the House, and its position in popular favor the wide world over.

It would be too much of a task on this occasion to attempt to show what will become of the Liberal Unionists. Political prophecy is always uncertain, and it has become increasingly uncertain of late years as regards affairs in England. It would need a long examination of speeches and votes since 1886 to show the tendency of the Liberal Unionists, and it would also be necessary to note the vital changes which have come over the Liberals who followed Mr. Gladstone in the split of ten years ago. But this much may be said, that come what may of the National party, the formation of which has been repeatedly discussed since 1887, it is now hardly possible for the Liberal Unionists to rejoin the Liberal party of to-day. Liberal Unionism has had an enormous influence on English Conservatism. It is only necessary to recall a few of the measures of the 1886-92 Parliament to make this clear. The Irish Land Purchase Act of 1887, the Local Government Act of 1888, the Free Education, and the Factory Acts of 1891 are all evidences of the change which has come over English Conservatism since 1886. In fact there has been a little movement both ways in the two parties now forming the Opposition to the Rosebery Government. The Conservatives most decidedly have moved forward. They occupy the ground that the moderate Liberals occupied ten years ago; while the Liberal Unionists have moved back to meet them, and the result is a party differing but little from the Liberal party of the years immediately following the Reform Act of 1867. The Conservatives and the Liberal Unionists make as a whole

a party which is hardly what some Anti-Home Rule Liberals would like, as concerns the Church and the liquor interest. But then the Liberal party of 1868 to 1874 was never very actively loyal toward the cause of religious equality and religious freedom. The Liberal administration of that period had to be pushed before it settled the University test question ; then it did not go so far as the Conservative Government went four years later ; while as regards the Church of England in its relations to the system of national elementary education, it is almost impossible for the Tory party of the present day to be more careful of church interests than the Liberal party was when it passed the Elementary Education Act of 1870.

I do not want to enter upon any prophecy ; but to me it seems more likely that the Liberal Unionists will gradually become part and parcel of the Conservative party, and enjoy with it, as they have not yet done, the advantages of power and office, than that they will join up forces with the Gladstone Liberals. When the rearrangement of parties comes about, it is much more likely that the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists, no matter under what party name they may then be organized, will draw some recruits from the moderate section of the Liberal party—from the men who are neither new Radicals nor Socialists—than that any of the six or seven groups now massed under the nominal and rather artificially brought about leadership of Lord Rosebery will be recruited from the ranks of the Liberal Unionists. Middle class England is rapidly becoming Conservative ; a glance at the election returns from the cities with large suburban populations shows that at once ; and the representatives of these middle class communities still acting with the Liberals in the House of Commons are likely to become fewer as each General Election comes round, and as the democracy becomes more assertive and more demanding.

In chronological order the next group in the House of Commons is that of the Parnellite Nationalists. The O'Shea

case, and all that it wrought in Irish politics, is too recent and too notorious to need recalling in any of its dismal details. A terrible fate seems to pursue all Irish National movements. The Irish party and their Liberal allies were hardly at an end of their rejoicings over the breakdown of the forged letters case in 1889 when the collapse of 1890 came upon them. It was then apparent that if the alliance which had lasted from 1886 was to continue, the Nationalists would have to find a new leader. The majority of them saw the matter in this light. They were slow in making the discovery, but, once made, they faced the consequences, and deposed Mr. Parnell. But Mr. Parnell had no intention of being set aside. He had the example of Sir Charles Dilke before him. Sir Charles Dilke at this time was just on the point of succeeding in his policy of bluff, and had been chosen as a Socialistic-Radical candidate for the constituency he now represents in Parliament. Mr. Parnell might be deposed from the leadership of the party he had built up; but he had no intention of disappearing from Parliamentary life. He was determined to stay, and the movement to keep him in politics led to the formation of the fifth party in the House of Commons.

The object of this party at that time was twofold—to keep Mr. Parnell to the front in Irish politics, and to resist what was regarded as dictation from the English allies. This group now numbers only nine; but its power is not to be measured by its numerical strength. It is to-day as compact and as much a unit, as the Parnellite party was in the 1874–80 Parliament. In estimating the power of any of the groups now forming the Liberal party, it must always be remembered that these groups united give the Liberal Government a majority of only thirty-six or thirty-seven over the Unionists. Hence, any determined leader who can command nine votes may do much mischief to the Government he has been helping to keep in power. He may even, if he so desires, by carefully watching his

opportunity, put it into a minority as a punishment for some shortcoming toward his party. There can be no doubt that the Parnellite party is a growing one, and one which will have increasing power in Ireland. And for this reason—that as far as is possible with its funds, and with its numbers, it is continuing the independent and one-mission policy which Mr. Parnell adopted in 1878, and which gave him his commanding position at Westminster after the General Election of 1885.

The appearance of these five groups, taking, as it were, the place of the two old parties, had come about before the General Election of 1892, the one which returned the Gladstone-Rosebery party to office. As has been shown, the Nationalist group came into existence in 1874; the Liberal Unionist group in 1886, and the Parnellite Nationalist group almost on the eve of the General Election of 1892. Other groups had been forming in the Liberal party between 1885 and 1892; but during the greater part of this period the Liberals had been in opposition, and the new groups, although in existence, had no opportunity of presenting their demands and insisting upon their being met. These new groups in the Liberal party had, of course, nothing to gain by making demands upon the Unionist administration, but they became clamorous and assertive almost before the new Liberal administration was formed in the autumn of 1892. The members of the new groups had done much to bring about the Liberal success at the polls, and they lost no time in demanding their reward. They were so eager for legislation in response to their demands that they were out of temper with the new Government for not calling an autumn session in 1892, and passing some of their measures before Home Rule was taken in hand.

These groups were enumerated at the outset of this paper, but it may be well to recall them. First comes the Radical group; next the Welsh group; and finally the Labor and Socialist group. The Radical group is made up largely of the representatives of the country constituencies, of the

members chosen by the rural democracy which voted for the first time in 1885. What this group desired was a sweeping measure of local government reform in the rural districts; some drastic reform in the administration of the poor law; the abrogation of the old feudal privileges which still attach to land in connection with the county magistracy; and radical amendments to the Allotments Acts which were passed in 1885 and 1887. It was to satisfy this group that there was an autumn sitting of Parliament in 1893, and nearly all the demands of the group were met in the very comprehensive measure now known as the Parish and District Councils Act. Had there been no autumn session, and no District and Parish Councils Act, 1893 would have been a legislative blank; for all the time of the ordinary session of Parliament, lasting as it did from February to October, was taken up with the Home Rule bill which was thrown out by the House of Lords.

The Welsh group comprises twenty-eight out of the thirty members who represent the Principality in the House of Commons. This group is more compact and more a unit than any group of members, coming from constituencies east of the Irish Sea, which has ever existed in Parliament. It joins with the English Radicals and Labor groups in all their demands; it endorses every one of them, and, with the exception of the Eight Hours bill for coal miners, it votes as a unit for them all. On the Eight Hours bill the Welsh Radicals are not quite a unit; they are not agreed on the eight hours from bank to bank, which is the central point in the bill promoted by the Labor members. But apart from all these general Radical questions, the Welsh group has a program of its own. First it demands the disestablishment of the English Church in Wales, and in the second place it is calling for land law reform in Wales on lines as favorable to the tenant as the measures already passed for Ireland.

The Labor group, which has gradually been increasing its numerical strength at Westminster since 1874, when the first

two Labor members, Mr. Thomas Burt and Mr. Macdonald, were elected, until it now numbers sixteen or seventeen members, demands first of all an amendment of the Employers' Liability Act which shall forbid all contracting out. It is a unit on this question. Then, with two or three exceptions, it is solid for a legal eight hours' day for miners. It has other demands, and endorses all the Radical demands, as well as the Welsh Radical program; but its special program includes a drastic employers' liability law, an eight hours' day and the payment of members of Parliament.

The group system, as it now stands, is thus less than two years old. There were no opportunities for the six groups in the Liberal party until that party came into power in 1892. But new as the system is, it is easy to trace some of its results and to forecast others. The first and foremost result of the new system was the Home Rule bill of 1893. It was of course group pressure which led to the introduction of the bill in 1886; but in that year Mr. Gladstone could have taken up Home Rule as he did, or he could have left the question alone. It would be idle to speculate on what he might have done; but at least he was not compelled to take up the question. He had no such alternative in 1893. He had committed himself to Home Rule in 1886, and recommitted himself dozens of times between then and the General Election of 1892. When that election resulted in his return to power by a majority of forty including the eighty-one Irish votes, he had no option whatever. He had to take up Home Rule, and he could not even decide for himself when he should do so. It must be the first measure of the new Parliament, or he would belie all his promises made in the preceding six years and at once lose the support of both groups of Irish Nationalists. No other course was open to him but to devote the session of 1893 to the Irish measure. This is the most outstanding example of the working of the new system.

Next in order as a signal example of it, is the measure

now first in the ministerial program for the disestablishment of the English Church in Wales. As I have stated, the Welsh Radicals number twenty-eight; they are a unit on this question; they are determined that if the present House of Commons lives long enough, it shall send the Welsh Disestablishment bill up to the House of Lords before the session of 1895 comes to an end. Early in the session of 1894 they were afraid that the Government were going to shuffle out of their promises to bring in the bill. Whatever may have been the intentions of the Government in regard to this matter, the Welsh members determined to put an end to the uncertainty at once. Mindful of the fact that the Government majority was only thirty-six, and that twenty-eight votes thrown in a direction contrary to the wishes of the Government would turn it out of office, they waited on the leader of the House of Commons, and appear to have done some very plain speaking, for the outcome of the interview was the exaction of a pledge that the Welsh Disestablishment bill shall have precedence over all Government measures in 1895.

Exactly the same sort of pressure was brought to bear on the leader of the House by the Labor group which is demanding an eight hours' day bill. The Government was to pledge itself to give facilities for the discussion of the bill, and to help it through all its stages in the House of Commons, or the Labor members would take a line of their own, which practically meant that some day, when every available vote was needed to save the Government, the Labor members might be elsewhere than at Westminster.

What, it may be asked, does all this mean? It simply means that a Liberal Government is no longer master of its own actions. When the Liberals are in power it is inevitable that their majorities must be narrow. The growing Conservatism of urban England and Scotland settles that much; and, as a consequence, any group which can command a dozen votes, and which is prepared to act as a unit

independently of the party as a whole, can say what measures must be taken up and when they shall be taken up, and if the Government does not concede its terms, it can turn them out of office almost at a day's notice. When narrow majorities are the rule, one group of fifteen or twenty can do this alone.

But side by side with this development of groups, there has grown up a system of log-rolling, altogether new in English politics. Groups act with each other, as well as for or against the Government, and any two groups acting together can at once end the life of an administration. Irish members have little or no interest in employers' liability; but in the session of 1893 they voted steadily with the Government every time when the contracting out principle came up for discussion. They acted in this way, of course, as some return for the services which the Government had rendered them on Home Rule; but they did so also as offering a *quid pro quo* to the Labor members for their support of the Home Rule bill, and for their expected if not actually pledged support on the Evicted Tenants' bill. There were occasions in the last Parliament when the Liberal Unionists forced concessions from the Conservatives. There was some little group pressure all through that Parliament; but the system has been seen at its best since the Gladstone-Rosebery ministry came into office in 1892. It is in fact the most obvious outcome so far of the era of the new democracy in England.

If the House of Lords retains anything of its present character—and to bring about any alteration will be a matter of years, if not of generations—the result of it all may be that what is now known as the Liberal party will cease to be a legislative power. The party may pass a disestablishment bill for Wales, or for England for that matter; it may in response to this pressure pass another Home Rule bill; or a bill making an eight hours' day compulsory; but as long as the House of Lords continues to hold its present position,

these measures will never get beyond the House of Commons. This sort of thing may in fact defeat itself, and in two ways. Either England will become more and more Conservative, and relegate Radicalism to something like permanent opposition, or the House of Lords will have as a permanent mission the rejection and re-rejection of all measures conceived and passed through the House of Commons solely in response to group pressure. To my mind the first of these eventualities seems most likely to happen; for one cannot closely observe all that is now going on in England without coming to the conclusion that the approaching General Election will relegate the present composite, if not nondescript, Liberal party to a long period of opposition.

EDWARD PORRITT.

Farmington, Conn.